826 [764] [763] [754] [752] [845]

As to the gross structure of the body, some persons learned about the skeleton when, in preparing corpses for cremation, the undertaker stripped the decaying flesh from the bones, usually in the presence of relatives and spectators of all ages. Occasional autopsies because of suspected sorcery, and surgical removal of a fetus from a deceased mother by caesarian section led to some knowledge of organs and blood vessels. Male and female masseurs of considerable competence were trained in the Chinese neuro-muscular system. A system of "origins," e.g. that the elbow-origin was in the arm pit, and the chest originated at the spine, might relate to the Chinese concept of linkage points on the body, in particular, acupuncture. In Bang Chan's popular conceptualization, the protecting skin which enclosed the body was thin at the top of the head and especially so at the stomach area. An old image also persisted that the body cavity itself was a relatively undivided space extending from neck to pelvis. Inside the cavity, food dropped from the top, faeces packed down at the bottom. Through the body curculated slowly the blood; several kinds of water (nāa) (McF. 453) e.g., the nâm khraam (refuse-water) (ibid. 453) in the abdomen; and several winds (lom) (ibid. 728) e.g., the pushing lom bēng (ibid. 487), and the pulling lom chawaa (ibid. 287). The small hair-whorls noted on the head, hip, or shoulder were construed as minor vortices of these currents, or as souls (khwan).

827 [172]

826

Foremost in people's minds were the elemental constituents of the body. The human body, along with every animal, plant, or mineral in the world, was made up of 4 elements (thāt): earth, fire, water, and wind (air).[10] This ancient four-fold view, also familiar to the Greeks, had mixed in Bang Chan with the traditional five-element Chinese system (metal, earth, fire, water, wood) because gold, iron, and wood were also spoken of as constitutional elements, and there may have been others. Some persons said that the proportions of the 4 major elements were the same for everyone; others, that they varied for different temperaments, which were also affected by the presence or absence of elements other than the basic 4.

---

10. "The body, comprising about a bushel of powdery earth-element, is held together by half a bushel of juicy water-element, and propped up by the windy-element. The fiery element digests what is eaten or drunk and preserves the body". (Visuddhi-Magga. [Warren:157-158]).

000
759
562
756
796

sacred books were inherited by males.

In the light of this definition, only the 2 or 3 males were true professional midwives. They gave elaborate annual ceremonies of homage to their teachers (wai khrū) attended by all the persons who had profited from the teacher's magic that year. However, all the male midwives were also fully qualified mɔ̄. Their ceremonies were large because they were dedicated to the teachers of their curing powers as well as midwifery.

759
562
756

The male midwives, then, were in a somewhat different category than the females. They were mɔ̄ who had, in addition, trained their hands for midwifery as an "extra specialty." Midwifery seems to have been one of the few areas where skilled hands were considered of greater importance than magic. "We have no magic for delivery," said one male midwife, knowing that nothing but merit could guarantee success. Because they had access to the incantations for element and spirit control, and could make holy water, the midwife-mɔ̄ could spare the parturient the necessity of getting in an outside mɔ̄, if such were needed. However, one part of the midwife's job the men could not do. To protect their male powers of invulnerability they were forbidden to wash the woman's clothing. A woman or a female midwife always had to do this. Men also could not provide the female "mystique" particularly related to the khwan and to growth.

759
562

However, the community did not adhere to this narrow definition of professionalism, for several of the experienced and competent women, Buddhist and Muslim, behaved as professionals and were accorded the title of mɔ̄ tamyaa. Their magical formulae, being congruent with their female office of promoters of growth and life, were especially effective. Like a mɔ̄ they received the ritual gift of the khwan khaw, hallmark of the possession of occult formulae, which the patient presented to assure the benefits of magical knowledge.[68]

[782]

68. This ritual bowl of rice and offerings was never excused even between the closest kin. If forgotten or misused, the "teacher" punished the midwife with pains, and had to be mollified with a food offering. The magical benefits could not be withheld once the khwan khaw had been accepted. It was not accepted if the patient were too near death to be assisted. If the patient died, the whole gift, cash, rice, and all, was given at once to the temple to make merit.

[763]